



INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release -- Immediate

November 23, 1935

BIG GAME IN NATIONAL FORESTS
STILL MAKING STEADY GAINS

- - -

Big game animals are more than holding their own in the national forests, although in many other areas they face serious depletion if not extinction. In the last ten years the number approximately doubled, and wildlife census figures compiled recently show continuing gains, the Forest Service announces.

A general increase in the number of antelopes, deer, elk, moose, and mountain sheep was shown by the estimates of game animals in the national forests at the beginning of 1935, compared with the preceding year. There was a slight decrease in the estimate of the number of bears and mountain goats.

Although a complete count of noses is impossible, the Forest Service game census is based upon actual counts in representative areas and upon continuous observations of Forest officers on the ground, and is believed to be as accurate an estimate and indicator of trends as can be obtained under existing circumstances. Some part of the decreases or increases shown this year, however, may be due to errors in past estimates.

There are 15,000 antelopes on the western national forests, it is estimated. This represents an increase of about 600 during the year. The antelopes are largely concentrated in the national forests of Arizona, Idaho, California, and Montana, with smaller numbers in Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Wyoming and Utah.

958-36

Under Forest Service management, deer have increased to a greater degree than any other big game animal. A total of 1,040,000 were reported at the beginning of this year -- a gain of 100,000 over the previous year's figure. California national forests, with an increase of 6,000, top the list with a grand total of 250,000. Many national forests in the South, Lake States, Northeastern, Inter-mountain, and Northern Rocky Mountain States have also showed material increases.

With the largest populations in the national forests of Wyoming and Montana, the census figures indicated an increase in the number of elk from 115,000 to 120,000. An increase of 1,000 in 1934 brought Wyoming's total to approximately 41,000. In Montana, the number remained steady at more than 20,000 and the 13,000 on the Oregon national forests and the 9,000 in Washington did not show much change. Elk increased on Colorado national forest lands from 13,700 to 15,200.

The national forest population of moose showed a slight increase, with the total at somewhat more than 8,000. Minnesota national forests contained about 3,000 at the start of 1935. Wyoming was just under that figure, and approximately 2,000 were recorded in Montana. Idaho and Alaska national forests reported a moose population of more than 500 each.

Addition of about a thousand mountain sheep to the 3,000 in the Wyoming national forests brought the Nation-wide total to well over 13,000. There were more than 3,000 in Colorado and 1,500 each in Alaska and Montana according to the current figures. Mountain goat population was placed at 17,900, a slight decrease from last year's estimate.

With over 55,000 black or brown bears and over 5,100 grizzlies recorded, there has been a slight general decrease in the number of these animals in the national forests. California national forests led with 11,400 black and brown bears, but suffered a loss during 1934 of about 1,000. Slight decreases were

reported in several other sections of the West, but in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, the bear population has increased nearly one-third. National forests in the South, with a small initial bear population, showed a noticeable rise. Grizzly bears are scarce in the national forests of the States, only 670 being recorded, but in the two national forests in Alaska, a total of 4,500 was the estimate for both 1934 and 1935. The Alaska brown bear is included in these figures.

The Forest Service, in practicing game management, holds to its general policy of "sustained yield" of all forest resources, of which big game is an important one. The objective is to develop and maintain as much wildlife -- in coordination with other forest values -- as the forests can support. Lack of adequate winter range is a limiting factor in the case of certain big game animals, notably elk.

In a few instances where there is conflict between game and domestic animals in the use of national forest range, the Forest Service is attempting to adjust this on the basis of highest social and economic values. In general, however, little conflict of this kind occurs, since some 60,000,000 acres of suitable game range in the national forests is not allotted for grazing of any domestic stock.

Many game refuges have been designated within the national forests. These are aiding in the reestablishment of depleted species. On other national forest areas, hunting is allowed under State game laws, enforcement of which the Forest Service aids. The Forest Service has the cooperation of the Biological Survey in technical game management studies; range conditions are carefully checked, and if, as sometimes happens, there is serious over-population of certain ranges by big game, it is remedied either by transplanting of game or by regulated hunting.